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“In the midst of the flock came the goat-boy.”

MONI THE GOAT BOY

BY

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CHAPTER I

ALL IS WELL WITH MONI

IT is a long, steep climb up to the Bath House at Fideris, after leaving the road leading up through the long valley of Prättigau. The horses pant so hard on their way up the mountain that you prefer to dismount and clamber up on foot to the green summit.

After a long ascent, you come first to the village of Fideris, which lies on the pleasant green height, and from there you go on farther into the mountains, until the lonely buildings connected with the Baths appear, surrounded on all sides by rocky mountains. The only trees that grow up there are firs, covering the peaks and rocks, and it would all look very gloomy if the delicate mountain flowers with their brilliant coloring were not peeping forth everywhere through the low pasture grass.

One clear summer evening two ladies stepped out of the Bath House and went along the narrow footpath, which begins to mount not far from the house and soon becomes very steep as it ascends to the high, towering crags. At the first projec-

tion they stood still and looked around, for this was the very first time they had come to the Baths.

“It is not very lively up here, Aunt,” said the younger, as she let her eyes wander around. “Nothing but rocks and fir woods, and then another mountain and more fir trees on it. If we are to stay here six weeks, I should like occasionally to see something more amusing.”

“It would not be very amusing, at all events, if you should lose your diamond cross up here, Paula,” replied the aunt, as she tied together the red velvet ribbon from which hung the sparkling cross. “This is the third time I have fastened the ribbon since we arrived; I don’t know whether it is your fault or the ribbon’s, but I do know that you would be very sorry if it were lost.”

“No, no,” exclaimed Paula, decidedly, “the cross must not be lost, on any account. It came from my grandmother and is my greatest treasure.”

Paula herself seized the ribbon, and tied two or three knots one after the other, to make it hold fast. Suddenly she pricked up her ears: “Listen, listen, Aunt, now something really lively is coming.”

A merry song sounded from far above them; then came a long, shrill yodel; then there was singing again.

The ladies looked upwards, but could see no living thing. The footpath was very crooked, often

passing between tall bushes and then between projecting slopes, so that from below one could see up only a very short distance. But now there suddenly appeared something alive on the slopes above, in every place where the narrow path could be seen, and louder and nearer sounded the singing.

“See, see, Aunt, there! Here! See there! See there!” exclaimed Paula with great delight, and before the aunt was aware of it, three, four goats came bounding down, and more and more of them, each wearing around the neck a little bell so that the sound came from every direction. In the midst of the flock came the goat-boy leaping along, and singing his song to the very end:

“And in winter I am happy,
For weeping is in vain,
And, besides, the glad springtime
Will soon come again.”

Then he sounded a frightful yodel and immediately with his flock stood right before the ladies, for with his bare feet he leaped as nimbly and lightly as his little goats.

“I wish you good evening!” he said as he looked gayly at the two ladies, and would have continued on his way. But the goat-boy with the merry eyes pleased the ladies.

“Wait a minute,” said Paula. “Are you the

goat-boy of Fideris? Do the goats belong to the village below?"

"Yes, to be sure!" was the reply.

"Do you go up there with them every day?"

"Yes, surely."

"Is that so? and what is your name?"

"Moni is my name—"

"Will you sing me the song once more, that you have just sung? We heard only one verse."

"It is too long," explained Moni; "it would be too late for the goats, they must go home." He straightened his weather-beaten cap, swung his rod in the air, and called to the goats which had already begun to nibble all around: "Home! Home!"

"You will sing to me some other time, Moni, won't you?" called Paula after him.

"Surely I will, and good night!" he called back, then trotted along with the goats, and in a short time the whole flock stood still below, a few steps from the Bath House by the rear building, for here Moni had to leave the goats belonging to the house, the beautiful white one and the black one with the pretty little kid. Moni treated the last with great care, for it was a delicate little creature and he loved it more than all the others. It was so attached to him that it ran after him continually all day long. He now led it very tenderly along and placed it in its shed; then he said:

“There, Mäggerli, now sleep well; are you tired? It is really a long way up there, and you are still so little. Now lie right down, so, in the nice straw!”

After he had put Mäggerli to bed in this way, he hurried along with his flock, first up to the hill in front of the Baths, and then down the road to the village.

Here he took out his little horn and blew so vigorously into it, that it resounded far down into the valley. From all the scattered houses the children now came running out; each rushed upon his goat, which he knew a long way off; and from the houses near by, one woman and then another seized her little goat by the cord or the horn, and in a short time the entire flock was separated and each creature came to its own place. Finally Moni stood alone with the brown one, his own goat, and with her he now went to the little house on the side of the mountain, where his grandmother was waiting for him, in the doorway.

“Has all gone well, Moni?” she asked pleasantly, and then led the brown goat to her shed, and immediately began to milk her. The grandmother was still a robust woman and cared for everything herself in the house and in the shed and everywhere kept order. Moni stood in the doorway of the shed and watched his grandmother. When the milk-

ing was ended, she went into the little house and said: "Come, Moni, you must be hungry."

She had everything already prepared. Moni had only to sit down at the table; she seated herself next him, and although nothing stood on the table but the bowl of corn-meal mush cooked with the brown goat's milk, Moni hugely enjoyed his supper. Then he told his grandmother what he had done through the day, and as soon as the meal was ended he went to bed, for in the early dawn he would have to start forth again with the flock.

In this way Moni had already spent two summers. He had been goat-boy so long and become so accustomed to this life and grown up together with his little charges that he could think of nothing else. Moni had lived with his grandmother ever since he could remember. His mother had died when he was still very little; his father soon after went with others to military service in Naples, in order to earn something, as he said, for he thought he could get more pay there.

His wife's mother was also poor, but she took her daughter's deserted baby boy, little Solomon, home at once and shared what she had with him. He brought a blessing to her cottage and she had never suffered want.

Good old Elizabeth was very popular with every one in the whole village, and when, two years be-

fore, another goat-boy had to be appointed, Moni was chosen with one accord, since every one was glad for the hard-working Elizabeth that now Moni would be able to earn something. The pious grandmother had never let Moni start away a single morning, without reminding him:

“Moni, never forget how near you are up there to the dear Lord, and that He sees and hears everything, and you can hide nothing from His eyes. But never forget, either, that He is near to help you. So you have nothing to fear, and if you can call upon no human being up there, you have only to call to the dear Lord in your need, and He will hear you immediately and come to your aid.”

So from the very first Moni went full of trust up to the lonely mountains and the highest crags, and never had the slightest fear or dread, for he always thought:

“The higher up, the nearer I am to the dear Lord, and so all the safer whatever may happen.”

So Moni had neither care nor trouble and could enjoy everything he did from morning till night. It was no wonder that he whistled and sang and yodeled continually, for he had to give vent to his great happiness.

CHAPTER II

MONI'S LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE following morning Paula awoke earlier than ever before; a loud singing had awakened her out of sleep.

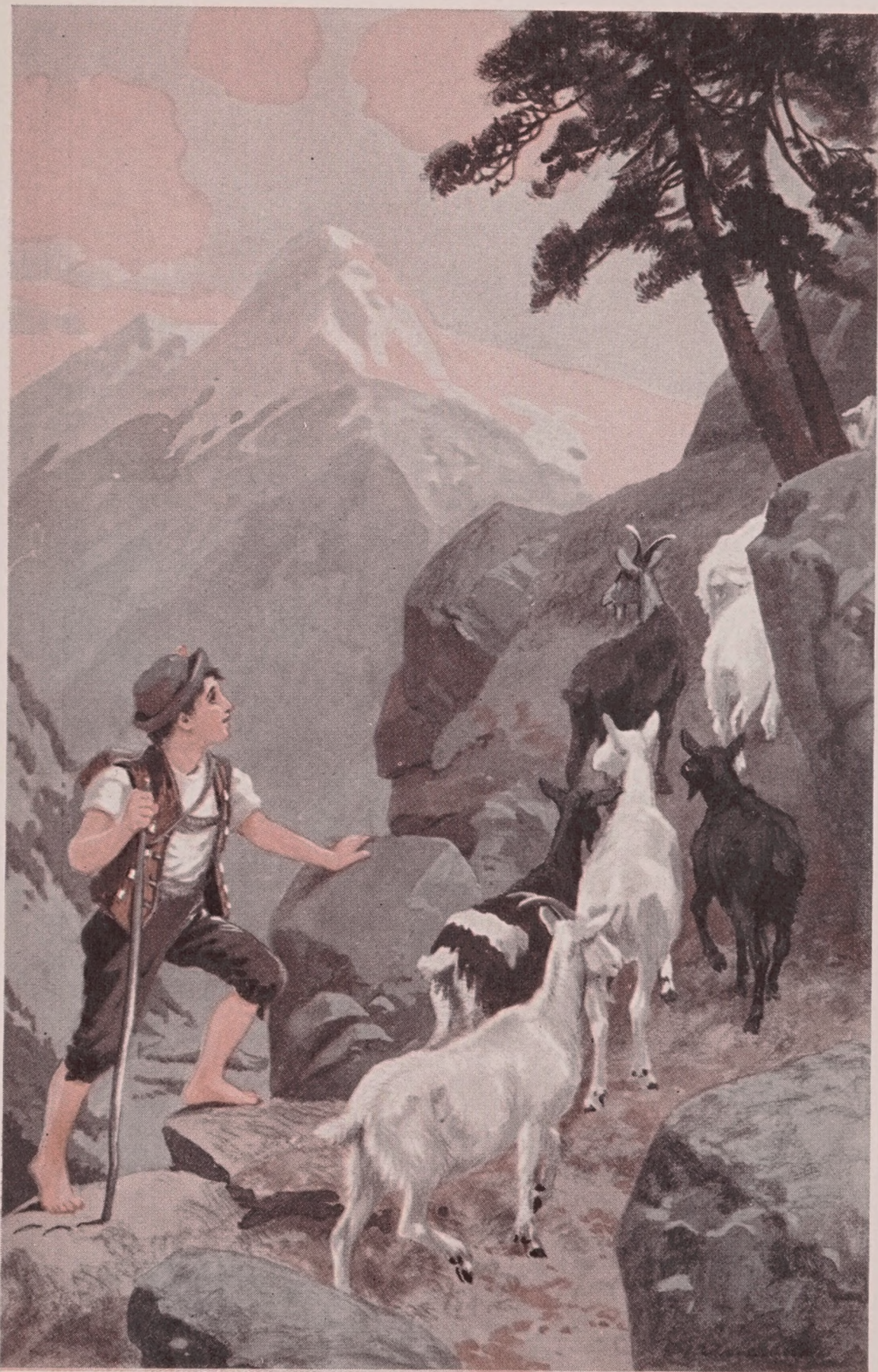
“That is surely the goat-boy so soon,” she said, springing out of bed and running to the window.

Quite right. With fresh, red cheeks there stood Moni below, and he had just brought the old goat and the little kid out of the goat shed. Now he swung his rod in the air, the goats leaped and sprang around him, and then he went along with the whole flock. Suddenly Moni raised his voice again and sang until the mountains echoed:

“Up yonder in the fir trees
Sing the birds in a choir,
And after the rain comes,
Comes the sun like a fire.”

“To-day he must sing his whole song for me once,” said Paula, for Moni had now disappeared and she could no longer understand the words of his distant song.

In the sky the rosy morning clouds were disappearing and a cool mountain breeze rustled around Moni's ears, as he climbed up. This he thought



“Moni climbed with his goats for an hour longer.”

just right. He yodeled with satisfaction from the first ledge so lustily down into the valley that many of the sleepers in the Bath House below opened their eyes in amazement, then closed them again at once, for they recognized the sound and knew that they could have an hour longer to sleep, since the goat-boy always came so early. Meanwhile Moni climbed with his goats for an hour longer, farther and farther up to the high cliffs above.

The higher up he mounted, the broader and more beautiful became the view. From time to time he looked around him, then gazed up into the bright sky, which was becoming bluer and bluer, then began to sing with all his might, louder and louder and more merrily the higher he came:

“Up yonder in the fir trees,
Sing the birds in a choir,
And after the rain comes,
Comes the sun like a fire.

“And the sun and the stars
And the moon in the night,
The dear Lord has made them
To give us delight.

“In the spring there are flowers —
They are yellow and gold,
And so blue is the sky then
My joy can't be told.

“ And in summer there are berries,
There are plenty if it's fine,
And the red ones and black ones,
I eat all from the vine.

“ If there are nuts in the bushes
I know what to do.
Where the goats like to nibble,
There I can hunt too.

“ And in winter I'm happy,
For weeping's in vain,
And, besides, the glad springtime
Will soon come again.”

Now the height was reached where he usually stayed, and where he was going to remain for a while to-day. It was a little green table-land, with so broad a projection that one could see from the top all round about and far, far down into the valley. This projection was called the Pulpit-rock, and here Moni could often stay for hours at a time, gazing about him and whistling away, while his little goats quite contentedly sought their feed around him.

As soon as Moni arrived, he took his provision bag from his back, laid it in a little hole in the ground, which he had dug out for this purpose, then went to the Pulpit-rock and threw himself on the grass in order to enjoy himself fully.

The sky had now become a deep blue; above were the high mountains with peaks towering to the sky and great ice-fields appearing, and far away down below the green valley shone in the morning light. Moni lay there, looking about, singing and whistling. The mountain wind cooled his warm face, and as soon as he stopped whistling, the birds piped all the more lustily and flew up into the blue sky. Moni was indescribably happy. From time to time Mäggerli came to Moni and rubbed her head around on his shoulder, as she always did out of sheer affection. Then she bleated quite fondly, went to Moni's other side and rubbed her head on the other shoulder. The other goats also, first one and then another, came to look at their keeper and each had her own way of paying the visit.

The brown one, his own goat, came very cautiously and looked at him to see if he was all right, then she would stand and gaze at him until he said: "Yes, yes, Braunli, it's all right, go and look for your fodder."

The young white one and Swallow, so called because she was so small and nimble and darted everywhere, like swallows into their holes, always rushed together upon Moni, so that they would have thrown him down, if he had not already been stretched out on the ground, and then they immediately darted off again.

The shiny Blackie, the goat belonging to the landlord of the Bath House, Mäggerli's mother, was a little proud; she came only to within a few steps of Moni, looked at him with her head lifted, as if she wouldn't appear too familiar, and then went her way again. The big Sultan, the billy-goat, never showed himself but once, then he pushed away all he found near Moni, and bleated several times as significantly as if he had information to give about the condition of the flock, whose leader he felt himself to be.

Little Mäggerli alone never allowed herself to be crowded away from her protector; if the billy-goat came and tried to push her aside, she crept so far under Moni's arm or head that the big Sultan no longer came near her, and so under Moni's protection the little kid was not the least bit afraid of him. Otherwise she would have trembled if he came near her.

Thus the sunny morning had passed; Moni had already taken his midday meal and now stood thinking as he leaned on his stick, which he often needed there, for it was very useful in climbing up and down. He was thinking whether he would go up to a new side of the rocks, for he wanted to go higher this afternoon with the goats, but the question was, to which side? He decided to take the left, for in that direction were the three Dragon-

stones, around which grew such tender shrubs that it was a real feast for the goats.

The way was steep, and there were dangerous places in the rugged wall of rock; but he knew a good path, and the goats were so sensible and did not easily go astray. He began to climb and all his goats gayly clambered after him, some in front, some behind him, little Mäggerli always quite close to him; occasionally he held her fast and pulled her along with him, when he came to a very steep place.

All went quite well and now they were at the top, and with high bounds the goats ran immediately to the green bushes, for they knew well the fine feed which they had often nibbled up here before.

“Be quiet! Be quiet!” commanded Moni, “don’t push each other to the steep places, for in a moment one of you might go down and have your legs broken. Swallow! Swallow! what are you thinking of?” he called full of excitement, up to the goat, for the nimble Swallow had climbed up to the high Dragon-stones and was now standing on the outermost edge of one of them and looking quite impertinently down on him. He climbed up quickly, for only a single step more and Swallow would be lying below at the foot of the precipice. Moni was very agile; in a few minutes he had climbed up on the crag, quickly seized Swallow by the leg, and pulled her down.

“Now come with me, you foolish little beast, you,” scolded Moni, as he dragged Swallow along with him to the others, and held her fast for a while, until she had taken a good bite of a shrub and thought no more of running away.

“Where is Mäggerli?” screamed Moni suddenly, as he noticed Blackie standing alone in a steep place, and not eating, but quietly looking around her. The little young kid was always near Moni, or running after its mother.

“What have you done with your little kid, Blackie?” he called in alarm and sprang towards the goat. She seemed quite strange, was not eating, but stood still in the same spot and pricked up her ears inquiringly. Moni placed himself beside her and looked up and down. Now he heard a faint, pitiful bleating; it was Mäggerli’s voice, and it came from below so plaintive and beseeching. Moni lay down on the ground and leaned over. There below something was moving; now he saw quite plainly, far down Mäggerli was hanging to the bough of a tree which grew out of the rock, and was moaning pitifully; she must have fallen over.

Fortunately the bough had caught her, otherwise she would have fallen into the ravine and met a sorry death. Even now, if she could no longer hold to the bough, she would fall into the depths and be dashed to pieces.

In the greatest anguish he called down: "Hold fast, Mäggerli, hold fast to the bough! See, I am coming to get you!" But how could he reach there? The wall of rock was so steep here, Moni saw very well that it would be impossible to go down that way. But the little goat must be down there somewhere near the Rain-rock, the overhanging stone under which good protection was to be found in rainy weather; the goat-boys had always spent rainy days there, therefore the stone had been called from old times the Rain-rock. From there, Moni thought he could climb across over the rocks and so bring back the little kid.

He quickly whistled the flock together and went with them down to the place from which he could reach the Rain-rock. There he left them to graze and went to the rock. Here he immediately saw, just a little bit above him, the bough of the tree, and the kid hanging to it. He saw very well that it would not be an easy task to climb up there and then down again with Mäggerli on his back, but there was no other way to rescue her. He also thought the dear Lord would surely stand by him, and then he could not possibly fail. He folded his hands, looked up to heaven and prayed: "Oh, dear Lord, help me, so that I can save Mäggerli!"

Then he was full of trust that all would go well, and bravely clambered up the rock until he reached

the bough above. Here he clung fast with both feet, lifted the trembling, moaning little creature to his shoulders, and then climbed with great caution back down again. When he had the firm earth under his feet once more and had saved the terror-stricken kid, he was so glad he had to offer thanks aloud and cried up to heaven:

“Oh, dear Lord, I thank Thee a thousand times for having helped us so well! Oh, we are both so glad for it!” Then he sat down on the ground a little while, and stroked the kid, for she was still trembling in all her delicate limbs, and comforted her for enduring so much suffering.

As it was soon time for departure, Moni placed the little goat on his shoulders again, and said anxiously:

“Come, you poor Mäggerli, you are still trembling; you cannot walk home to-day, I must carry you—” and so he carried the little creature, clinging close to him, all the way down.

Paula was standing on the last rise in front of the Bath House, waiting for the goat-boy. Her aunt had accompanied her. When Moni came down with his burden on his back, Paula wanted to know if the kid was sick, and showed great interest. When Moni saw this, he at once sat down on the ground in front of Paula and told her his day's experience with Mäggerli.

The young lady showed very keen interest in the affair and stroked the little rescued creature, which now lay quietly in Moni's lap and looked very pretty, with its white feet, and the beautiful black pelt on its back. It was very willing to be stroked by her.

"Now sing your song again for me, while you are sitting here," said Paula. Moni was in such a gay frame of mind that he willingly and heartily began and sang his whole song to the end.

This pleased Paula exceptionally well and she said he must sing it to her often again. Then the whole company went together down to the Bath House. Here the kid was laid in its bed, Moni said farewell, and Paula went back to her room to talk with her aunt longer about the goat-boy, whose merry morning song she had enjoyed again.

CHAPTER III

A VISIT

THUS many days passed by, one as sunny and clear as the other, for it was an unusually beautiful summer, and the sky remained blue and cloudless from morning till evening.

Every morning, early, without exception the goat-boy, singing lustily, went by the Bath House. Every evening he came back again singing lustily. All the guests were so accustomed to the merry sound that not one would have willingly missed it.

More than all the others, Paula delighted in Moni's joyfulness and went out almost every evening to meet him and talk with him.

One sunny morning Moni had once more reached the Pulpit-rock, and was about to throw himself down, when he changed his mind. "No, go on! The last time you had to leave all the nice little plants because we had to go after Mäggerli; now we will go up there again, so that you can finish nibbling them!"

The goats all leaped with delight after him, for they knew they were going up to the lovely bushes on the Dragon-stones. To-day Moni held his little Mäggerli the whole time fast in his arms, pulled

the sweet plants himself from the rocks and let her eat out of his hand. This pleased the little goat best of all. She rubbed her head quite contentedly from time to time against Moni's shoulder and bleated happily. So the whole morning passed, before Moni noticed, from his own hunger, that it had grown late before he was aware of it. But he had left his luncheon below near the Pulpit-rock, in the little hole, for he had intended to return again at noon.

“Well, you have had your fill of good things, and I have had nothing,” he said to his goats. “Now I must have something too, and you will find enough more down below. Come along!” Whereupon he gave a loud whistle, and the whole flock started away, the liveliest always ahead, and first of all light-footed Swallow, who was to meet something unexpected to-day. She sprang down from stone to stone and across many a cleft in the rocks, but all at once she could go no farther—directly in front of her suddenly stood a chamois and gazed with curiosity into her face. This had never happened to Swallow before! She stood still, looked questioningly at the stranger and waited for the chamois to get out of her way and let her leap to the boulder, as she intended. But the chamois did not stir and gazed boldly into Swallow's eyes. So they stood facing each other, more

and more obstinate, and might have stood there until now, if the big Sultan had not come along in the meantime. As soon as he saw the state of things, he stepped quite considerably past Swallow and suddenly pushed the chamois aside so far and with such violence, that she had to make a daring leap, not to fall down over the rocks. Swallow went triumphantly on her way, and the Sultan marched proudly and contentedly behind her, for he felt himself to be the sure protector of the goats in his flock.

Meanwhile Moni coming down from above, and another goat-boy coming up from below, met at the same spot and looked at each other in astonishment. But they were well acquainted, and after the first surprise greeted each other cordially. It was Jörgli from Küblis. Half the morning he had been looking in vain for Moni and now he met him up here, where he had not expected to find him.

“I didn’t suppose you came up so high with the goats,” said Jörgli.

“To be sure I do,” replied Moni, “but not always; usually I stay by the Pulpit-rock and around there. Why have you come up here?”

“To make you a visit,” was the reply. “I have something to tell you. Besides, I have two goats here, that I am bringing to the landlord at the Baths. He is going to buy one, and so I thought I would come up to see you.”

“Are they your own goats?” asked Moni.

“Surely, they are ours. I don’t tend strange ones any longer. I am not a goat-boy now.”

Moni was very much surprised at this, for Jörgli had become the goat-boy of Küblis at the same time he had been made goat-boy of Fideris, and Moni did not understand how Jörgli could give it up without a single murmur.

Meanwhile the goat-boys and their flocks had reached the Pulpit-rock. Moni brought out bread and a small piece of dried meat and invited Jörgli to share his midday meal. They both sat down on the Pulpit-rock and ate heartily, for it had grown very late and they had excellent appetites. When everything was eaten and they had drunk a little goat’s milk, Jörgli comfortably stretched himself at full length on the ground, and rested his head on both arms, but Moni remained sitting, for he always liked to look down into the deep valley below.

“But what are you now, Jörgli, if you are no longer goat-boy?” began Moni. “You must be something.”

“Surely I am something, and something very good,” replied Jörgli, “I am egg-boy. Every day I carry eggs to all the hotels, as far as I can go; I come up here to the Bath House, too. Yesterday I was there.”

Moni shook his head. "That's nothing. I wouldn't be an egg-boy; I would a thousand times rather be goat-boy, it is much finer."

"But why?"

"Eggs are not alive, you can't speak a word to them, and they don't run after you like the goats which are glad to see you when you come, and are fond of you, and understand every word you say to them; you can't have any pleasure with eggs as you can with the goats up here."

"Yes, and you," interrupted Jörgli, "what great pleasure do you have up here? Just now you have had to get up six times while we were eating, just on account of that silly kid, to prevent it from falling down below—is that a pleasure?"

"Yes, I like to do that! Isn't it so, Mäggerli? Come! Come here!" Moni jumped up and ran after the kid, for it was making dangerous leaps for sheer joy. When he sat down again, Jörgli said:

"There is another way to keep the young goats from falling over the rocks, without having to be always jumping after them, as you do."

"What is it?" asked Moni.

"Drive a stick firmly into the ground and fasten the goat by the leg to it; she will kick furiously, but she can't get away."

"You needn't think I would do any such thing

to the little kid!" said Moni quite angrily and drew Mäggerli to him and held her fast, as if to protect her from any such treatment.

"You really won't have to take care of that one much longer," began Jörgli again. "It won't come up here many times more."

"What? What? What did you say, Jörgli?" demanded Moni.

"Bah, don't you know about it? The landlord will not raise her, she is too weak; there never was a more feeble goat. He wanted to sell her to my father, but he wouldn't have her either; now the landlord is going to have her killed next week, and then he will buy our spotted one."

Moni had become quite pale from terror. At first he couldn't speak a word; but now he broke out and complained aloud over the little kid:

"No, no, that shall not be done, Mäggerli, it shall not be done. They shall not slay you, I can't bear that. Oh, I would rather die with you; no, that cannot be!"

"Don't do so," said Jörgli, angrily, and pulled Moni up, for in his grief he had thrown himself face down on the ground. "Stand up, you know the kid really belongs to the landlord and he can do what he likes with her. Think no more about it! Come, I know something. See! See!" Whereupon Jörgli held out one hand to Moni, and

with the other almost covered the object, which Moni was to admire; it sparkled wonderfully in his hand, for the sun shone straight into it.

“What is it?” asked Moni, when it sparkled again, lighted up by a sunbeam.

“Guess!”

“A ring?”

“No, but something like that.”

“Who gave it to you?”

“Gave it to me? Nobody. I found it myself.”

“Then it does not belong to you, Jörgli.”

“Why not? I didn’t take it from anybody. I almost stepped on it with my foot, then it would have been broken; so I can just as well keep it.”

“Where did you find it?”

“Down by the Bath House, yesterday evening.”

“Then some one from the house below lost it. You must tell the landlord, and if you don’t, I will do it this evening.”

“No, no, Moni, don’t do that,” said Jörgli, beseechingly. “See, I will show you what it is, and I will sell it to a maid in one of the hotels, but she will surely have to give me four francs; then I will give you one or two, and nobody will know anything about it.”

“I will not take it! I will not take it!” interrupted Moni, hotly, “and the dear Lord has heard everything you have said.”



“Forgli had opened his hand. In it lay a cross set with a large number of stones.”

Jörgli looked up to the sky: "Oh, so far away," he said skeptically; but he immediately began to speak more softly.

"He hears you still," said Moni, confidently.

It was no longer Jörgli's secret. If he didn't know how to bring Moni to his side, all would be lost. He thought and thought.

"Moni," he said suddenly, "I will promise you something that will delight you, if you will not say anything to a human being about what I have found; you really don't need to take anything for it, then you will have nothing to do with it. If you will do as I say, I will make my father buy Mäggerli, so she will not be killed. Will you?"

A hard struggle arose in Moni. It was wrong to help keep the discovery secret. Jörgli had opened his hand. In it lay a cross set with a large number of stones, which sparkled in many colors. Moni realized that it was not a worthless thing which no one would inquire about; he felt exactly as if he himself should be keeping what did not belong to him if he remained silent. But on the other hand was the little, affectionate Mäggerli, that was going to be killed in a horrible way with a knife, and he could prevent it if he kept silent. Even now the little kid was lying so trustfully beside him, as if she knew that he would always keep it; no, he could not let this happen, he must try to save it.

“Yes, I will, Jörgli,” he said, but without any enthusiasm.

“Then it is a bargain!” and Jörgli offered his hand to Moni, that he might seal the argument, as that was the only way to make a promise binding.

Jörgli was very glad that now his secret was safe; but as Moni had become so quiet, and he had much farther to go to reach home than Moni, he considered it well to start along with his two goats. He said good-night to Moni and whistled for his two companions, which meanwhile had joined Moni’s grazing goats, but not without much pushing and other doubtful behavior between the two parties, for the goats from Fideris had never heard that they ought to be polite to visitors and the goats from Küblis did not know that they ought not to seek out the best plants or push the others away from them, when they were visiting. When Jörgli had gone some distance down the mountain, Moni also started along with his flock, but he was very still and neither sang a note nor whistled, all the way home.

CHAPTER IV

MONI CAN NO LONGER SING

ON the following morning Moni came up the path to the Bath House, just as silent and cast down as the evening before. He brought out the landlord's goats quietly and went on upwards, but he sang not a note, nor did he give a yodel up into the air; he let his head hang and looked as if he were afraid of something; now and then he looked around timidly, as if some one were coming after him to question him.

Moni could no longer be merry; he didn't know himself exactly why. He wanted to be glad that he had saved Mäggerli, and sing, but he couldn't express it. To-day the sky was covered with clouds, and Moni thought when the sun came out it would be different and he could be happy again.

When he reached the top, it began to rain quite hard. He took refuge under the Rain-rock, for it soon poured in streams from the sky.

The goats came, too, and placed themselves here and there under the rock. The aristocratic Blackie immediately wanted to protect her beautiful shiny coat and crept in under the rock before Moni did. She was now standing behind Moni and looking

out from her comfortable corner into the pouring rain. Mäggerli was standing in front of its protector under the projecting rock and gently rubbed its little head against his knee; then it looked up at him in surprise, because Moni did not say a word, and it was not accustomed to that. Moni sat thoughtfully, leaning on his staff, for in such weather he always kept it in his hand, to keep himself from slipping on the steep places, for on such days he wore shoes. Now, as he sat for hours under the Rain-rock, he had plenty of time for reflection.

Moni thought over what he had promised Jörgli, and it seemed to him that if Jörgli had taken something, he was practically doing the same thing himself, because Jörgli had promised to give him something or do something for him. He had surely done what was wrong, and the dear Lord was now against him. This he felt in his heart, and it was right that it was dark and rainy and that he was hidden under the rock, for he would not even have dared look up into the blue sky, as usual.

But there were still other things that Moni had to think about. If Mäggerli should fall down over a steep precipice again, and he wanted to get it, the dear Lord would no longer protect him, and he no longer dared to pray to Him about it and call upon Him, and so had no more safety; and if then he should slip and fall down with Mäggerli deep over

the jagged rocks, and both of them should lie all torn and maimed! Oh, no, he said with anguish in his heart, that must not happen anyway; he must manage to be able to pray again and come to the dear Lord with everything that weighed on his heart; then he could be happy again, that he felt sure of. Moni would throw off the weight that oppressed him, he would go and tell the landlord everything—But then? Then Jörgli would not persuade his father, and the landlord would slaughter Mäggerli. Oh, no! Oh, no! he couldn't bear that, and he said: "No, I will not do it! I will say nothing!" But he did not feel satisfied, and the weight on his heart grew heavier and heavier. Thus Moni's whole day passed.

He started home at evening as silent as he had come in the morning. When he found Paula standing near the Bath House, and she sprang quickly across to the goat-shed and asked sympathetically: "Moni, what is the matter? Why don't you sing any more?" he turned shyly away and said:

"I can't," and as quickly as possible made off with his goats.

Paula said to her aunt above: "If I only knew what was the matter with the goat-boy! He is quite changed. You wouldn't know him. If he would only sing again!"

"It must be the frightful rain which has silenced the boy so!" remarked the aunt.

"Everything all comes together; let us go home, Aunt," begged Paula, "there is no more pleasure here. First I lost my beautiful cross, and it can't be found; then comes this endless rain, and now we can't ever hear the merry goat-boy any more. Let us go away!"

"The cure must be finished, or it will do no good," explained the aunt.

It was also dark and gray on the following day, and the rain poured down without ceasing. Moni spent the day exactly like the one before. He sat under the rock and his thoughts went restlessly round in a circle, for when he decided: "Now, I will go and confess the wrong, so that I shall dare to look up to the dear Lord again," then he saw the little kid under the knife before him and it all began over again in his mind from the beginning; so that with thinking and brooding, and the weight he carried, he was very tired by night, and crept home in the streaming rain as if he didn't notice it at all.

By the Bath House below the landlord was standing in the back doorway and called to Moni: "Come in with them. They are wet enough! Why, you are crawling down the mountain like a snail! I wonder what is the matter with you!"

The landlord had never been so unfriendly be-

fore. On the contrary he had always made the most friendly remarks to the merry goat-boy. But Moni's changed appearance did not please him, and besides he was in a worse humor than usual because Fräulein Paula had just complained to him about her loss and assured him that the valuable cross could only have been lost in the house or directly in front of the house-door. She had only stepped out on that day towards evening, to hear the goat-boy sing on his way home. To have it said that it was possible for such a costly thing to be lost in his house, beyond recovery, made him very cross. The day before he had called together the whole staff of servants, examined and threatened them, and finally offered a reward to the finder. The whole house was in an uproar over the lost ornament.

When Moni with his goats passed by the front of the house, Paula was standing there. She had been waiting for him, for she wondered very much whether he would ever sing any more or be merry. As he now crept by, she called:

“Moni! Moni! Are you really the same goat-boy who used to sing from morning till night:

“‘And so blue is the sky there
My joy can't be told’?”

Moni heard the words very well; he gave no answer, but they made a great impression on him.

Oh, how different it really was from the time when he could sing all day long and he felt exactly as he sang. Oh, if it could only be like that again!

Again Moni climbed up the mountain, silent and sad and without singing. The rain had now ceased, but thick fog hung around on the mountains, and the sky was still full of dark clouds. Moni again sat under the rock and battled with his thoughts. About noon the sky began to clear; it grew brighter and brighter. Moni came out of his cave and looked around. The goats once more sprang gayly here and there, and the little kid was quite frolicsome from delight at the returning sun and made the merriest leaps.

Moni stood on the Pulpit-rock and saw how it was growing brighter and more beautiful below in the valley and above over the mountains beyond. Now the clouds scattered and the lovely light-blue sky looked down so cheerfully that it seemed to Moni as if the dear Lord were looking out of the bright-blue at him, and suddenly it became quite clear in his heart what he ought to do. He could not carry the wrong around with him any more; he must throw it off. Then Moni seized the little kid, that was jumping about him, took it in his arms and said tenderly: "Oh, Mäggerli, you poor Mäggerli! I have certainly done what I could, but

it is wrong, and that must not be done. Oh, if only you didn't have to die! I can't bear it!"

And Moni began to cry so hard, that he could no longer speak, and the kid bleated pitifully and crept far under his arm, as if it wanted to cling to him and be protected. Then Moni lifted the little goat on his shoulders, saying:

"Come, Mäggerli, I will carry you home once more to-day. Perhaps I can't carry you much longer."

When the flock came down to the Bath House, Paula was again standing on the watch. Moni put the young goat with the black one in the shed, and instead of going on farther, he came toward the young lady and was going past her into the house. She stopped him.

"Still no singing, Moni? Where are you going with such a troubled face?"

"I have to tell about something," replied Moni, without lifting his eyes.

"Tell about something? What is it? Can't I know?"

"I must tell the landlord. Something has been found."

"Found? What is it? I have lost something, a beautiful cross."

"Yes, that is just what it is."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Paula, in the

greatest surprise. "Is it a cross with sparkling stones?"

"Yes, exactly that."

"What have you done with it, Moni? Give it to me. Did you find it?"

"No, Jörgli from Küblis found it."

Then Paula wanted to know who he was and where he lived, and to send some one to Küblis at once to get the cross.

"I will go as fast as I can, and if he still has it I will bring it to you," said Moni.

"If he still has it?" said Paula. "Why shouldn't he still have it? And how do you know all about it, Moni? When did he find it, and how did you hear about it?"

Moni looked on the ground. He didn't dare say how it had all come about, and how he had helped to conceal the discovery until he could no longer bear it.

But Paula was very kind to Moni. She took him aside, sat down on the trunk of a tree beside him, and said with the greatest friendliness:

"Come, tell me all about how it happened, Moni, for I want so much to know everything from you."

Then Moni gained confidence and began to relate the whole story, and told her every word of his struggle about Mäggerli and how he had lost all happiness and dared no longer look up to the dear

Lord, and how to-day he couldn't bear it any longer.

Then Paula talked with him very kindly and said he should have come immediately and told everything, and it was right that he had told her all now so frankly, and that he would not regret it. Then she said he could promise Jörgli ten francs, as soon as she had the cross in her hands again.

"Ten francs!" repeated Moni, full of astonishment, for he knew how Jörgli would have sold it for much less. Then Moni rose and said he would go right away that very day to Küblis, and if he got the cross he would bring it with him early the next morning. He ran along and was once more able to leap and jump, for he had a much lighter heart and the heavy burden no longer weighed him down to the ground.

When he reached home, he only put his goats in, told his grandmother he had an errand to do, and ran at once down to Küblis. He found Jörgli at home and told him without delay what he had done. At first the boy was very angry, but when he considered that all was known, he took out the cross and asked:

"Will she give me anything for it?"

"Yes, and now you can see, Jörgli," said Moni, indignantly, "how by being honorable you will re-

ceive ten francs, and by being deceitful only four: the ten francs you are going to have now.”

Jörgli was very much amazed. He regretted that he had not gone immediately with the cross to the Bath House, after he had picked it up in front of the door, for now he had not a clear conscience and it might have been so different! But now it was too late. He gave the cross to Moni, who hastened home with it, for it had already grown quite dark.

CHAPTER V.

MONI SINGS AGAIN

PAULA had given orders to be wakened early the next morning, for she wanted to be on the spot when the goat-boy came. She was anxious to deal with him herself. That evening she had held a long conversation with the landlord, and had then come out of his room quite happy; so she must have planned something delightful with him.

When the goat-boy came along with his flock in the morning, Paula was already standing in front of the house, and she called out:

“Moni, can’t you sing even now?”

He shook his head. “No, I can’t. I am always wondering how much longer Mäggerli will go with me. I never can sing any more as long as I live, and here is the cross.” Whereupon he handed her a little package, for the grandmother had wrapped it carefully for him in three or four papers.

Paula took out the cross from the wrappings and examined it closely. It really was her beautiful cross with the sparkling stones, and quite unharmed.

“Well, Moni,” she said now very kindly, “you have given me a great pleasure, for if it had not been for you, I might never have seen my cross again. Now, I am going to give you a pleasure. Go take Mäggerli there out of the shed, she belongs to you now!”

Moni stared at the young lady in astonishment, as if it were impossible to understand her words. At last he stammered: “But how—how can Mäggerli be mine?”

“How?” replied Paula, smiling. “See, last evening I bought her from the landlord and this morning I give her to you. Now can’t you sing once more?”

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” exclaimed Moni and ran like mad to the shed, led the little goat out, and took it in his arms. Then he leaped back and held out his hand to Paula and said over and over again:

“I thank you a thousand, thousand times! May God reward you! If I could do something nice for you!”

“Well, then try once more and let us see if you can sing again!” said Paula.

Then Moni sang his song and went on up the mountain with the goats, and his jubilant tones rang down into the valley, so that there was no one in the whole Bath House who did not hear it and many an one turned over in his bed and said: “The goat-boy has good weather once more.”

All were glad to hear him sing again, for all had depended on the merry alarm, some in order to get up, others to sleep a while longer.

When Moni, from the first summit, saw Paula still standing below in front of the house, he stepped as far out as possible and sang down at the top of his voice:

“And so blue is the sky there
My joy can't be told.”

The whole day long Moni shouted for joy, and all the goats caught his spirit and jumped and sprang around as if it were a great festival. The sun shone cheerfully down out of the blue sky, and after the great rain, all the little plants were so fresh, and the yellow and red flowers so bright, it seemed to Moni as if he had never seen the mountains and the valley and the whole world so beautiful before. He didn't let the little kid leave him the whole day; he pulled up the best plants for it and fed it, and said over and over again:

“Mäggerli, you dear Mäggerli, you do not have to die. You are now mine and will come up to the pasture with me as long as we live.” And with resounding singing and yodeling Moni came down again at evening and after he had led the black goat to her shed, he took the little kid in his arms, for it was now coming home with him. Mäggerli

did not look as if it would rather stay there, but pressed close to Moni and felt that it was under the best protection, for Moni had for a long time treated it better and more kindly than its own mother.

But when Moni came near his grandmother's with Mäggerli on his shoulders, she didn't know at all what to make of it, and although Moni called from a distance:

"She belongs to me, Grandmother, she belongs to me!" she didn't understand for some time what he meant. But Moni couldn't explain to her yet; he ran to the shed, and there right next to Brownie, so that it wouldn't be afraid, he made Mäggerli a fine, soft bed of fresh straw, and laid it down, saying:

"There, Mäggerli, now sleep well in your new home! You must always have this; every day I will make you a new bed!"

Then Moni came back directly to his wondering grandmother, and while they sat together at their supper, he told her the whole story from the very beginning about his three days so full of trouble, and the happy ending to-day.

The grandmother listened very quietly and attentively and when he came to the end, she said earnestly:

"Moni, you must remember what has happened

to you now, as long as you live! While you were having so great trouble with wrong-doing in order to help the little creature, the dear Lord had already found a way to help it and make you happy as soon as you would do what was right in His sight. If you had done right at once, and trusted in God, all would have gone well at first. Now the dear Lord has helped you beyond all you deserved, so that you will not forget it your whole life long."

"No, I will surely never forget it," said Moni, eagerly assenting, "and will always truly think, the first thing: I must only do what is right before the dear Lord. He will take care of all the rest."

But before Moni could lie down to sleep, he had to look into the shed once more, to see if it were really possible that the little kid was lying out there and belonged to him.

Jörgli received the ten francs according to the agreement, but he was not allowed to escape from the affair so easily as that. When he returned to the Bath House, he was brought to the landlord who took the boy by the collar, gave him a good shaking, and said threateningly:

"Jörgli! Jörgli! Don't you try a second time to bring my whole house into bad repute! If anything like this happens a single time again, you

will come out of my house in a way that will not please you! See, up there hangs a very sharp willow rod for such cases. Now go and think this over.”

Moreover, the event had other consequences for the boy. From this time on, if anything was lost anywhere in the Bath House, all the servants immediately exclaimed: “Jörgli from Küblis has it!” and if he came afterwards into the house they all pounced on him together and cried: “Give it here, Jörgli! Out with it!” And if he assured them he had nothing and knew nothing about it, they would all exclaim: “We know you already!” and “You can’t fool us!”

So Jörgli had to endure the most menacing attacks continually, and had hardly a moment’s peace any more, for if he saw any one approaching him, he at once thought he was coming to ask if he had found this or that. So Jörgli was not at all happy, and a hundred times he thought: “If only I had given back that cross immediately! I will never in my whole life keep anything else that doesn’t belong to me.”

But Moni never ceased singing and yodeling, the whole summer long, for there was hardly another human being in the world as happy as he was up there with his goats. Often, however, when he lay stretched out in his contentment on the Pulpit-rock,

and gazed down into the sunny valley below, he had to think how he had sat that time with the heavy burden on his heart, under the Rain-rock, and all happiness was gone; and he would say again and again in his heart: "I know now what I will do, so that it will never happen again: I will do nothing that will prevent me from looking up gladly to heaven, because this is right to the dear Lord."

But if it chanced that Moni became too long absorbed in his meditation, one or another of the goats would come along, gaze wonderingly at him and try to attract his attention by bleating, which oftentimes he did not hear for quite a while. Only when Mäggerli came and called after him longingly, then he heard at once and came leaping to it immediately, for his affectionate little kid always remained Moni's dearest possession.





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